



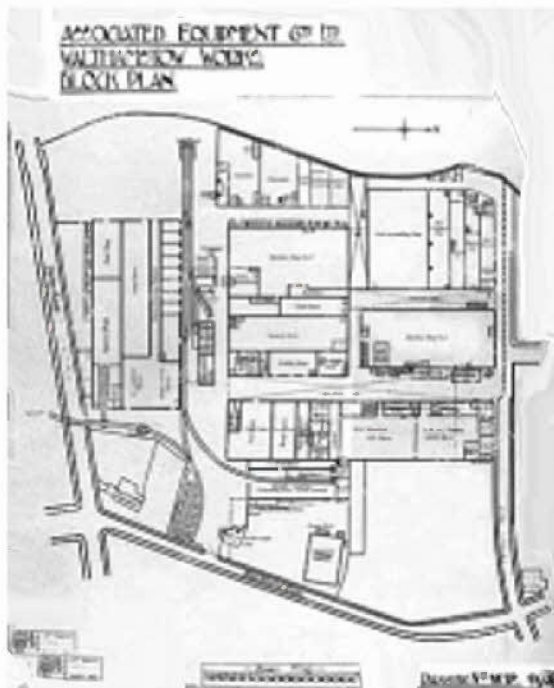
# Associated Equipment Company

## Arthur Salisbury Jones & the Motor Omnibus Company



The story of the *Associated Equipment Company* began in 1905 when *Arthur Salisbury Jones* (A member of the stock exchange) realised that there was a need to rationalise the existing system of dozens of independent passenger carrying traders in London by forming a single company that would meet the need of London commuters.

From the beginning he realised that he needed to control the manufacture and design of his vehicles and this was achieved by forming the *Motor Omnibus Company*. In 1906 he rented a tin shed in Hookers Lane (Off of Blackhorse Lane) in Walthamstow and used this as the base from which he purchased parts from a range of contractors that were assembled into vehicles at the Walthamstow site.



## The Blackhorse Lane Factory

By 1907 he had three hundred '*Vanguard*' buses on London roads and he opened a new 30,000 square foot factory on the Hooker Lane site. This then enabled him to bring 'in-house' much of the work that previously had been carried out by outside contractors. By the following year, the factory had doubled in size and the workforce increased from 6 people in 1906 to over 570 workers. The factory was situated in the area to the rear of the Standard public house in Blackhorse Lane and Ferry Lane. It was a huge site that was bounded by Ferry Lane, Blackhorse Lane, Hookers Road and the High Maynard reservoir.

The incredible rate of expansion of the new London transport system caused vehicles to be bought from many sources including overseas suppliers. This caused major problems of vehicle safety and reliability with much of this caused by mechanical failure.

*Above, a block plan of the Walthamstow factory in 1904. Ferry Lane is on the left, Blackhorse Lane at the bottom, Hooker Road to the right and High Maynard reservoir at the top of the picture.*



*Above, a new bus leaves the Walthamstow factory.*

### **Amalgamation creates the LGOC, the biggest London Bus Company.**

The rapid expansion of business caused *Arthur Salisbury Jones*, whose company was the largest petrol bus operator in London and the other major bus operators, severe financial problems. These were overcome by a merger between his *Motor Omnibus Company* and the giant *London General Omnibus Company*, a company that had done much to amalgamate and regulate the existing horse drawn bus services in London.

The new *LGOC* company now was the biggest London bus operator and began the standardisation of vehicles and improving reliability. Although horse drawn buses were painted in a variety of colours, from 1907 all *LGOC* buses were painted red and from 1910, the buses made at the Walthamstow factory were made with the letters *LGOC* cast into their radiator top tanks.

### **The Associated Equipment Company (AEC) is born**

In 1910 they designed the *B* type bus that was built at the Walthamstow factory. In 1912 the *LGOC* reorganised the company by separating its bus operation activities from the manufacturing side. The new manufacturing company based at Blackhorse Lane in Walthamstow was called the *Associated Equipment Company*. The design of the *B* type bus ultimately evolved into the familiar London Transport *Routemaster* series of buses that are the archetypal worldwide image of London.



*Above, the LGOC B type number E43 bus in the Imperial War Museum*

The B type bus rapidly proved to be the better and more reliable bus than any other London bus and by 1913, 2,500 had been built. The secret of their success was standardisation as they were built of interchangeable parts. This B type was a major factor in hastening the demise of horse drawn buses and became the design benchmark for all further buses.

### **Old Bill' in WWI**

In WWI (1914-18) the government commissioned many B type buses that were modified for use as troop-carriers in France. The buses were used to move troops behind the lines during World War I. After initially serving without any modifications they were painted khaki, had their windows removed, and were fitted with 2 inch thick planks to provide some limited protection. Some had anti-aircraft guns attached to them, others



were made into pigeon lofts to house the pigeons used for communication along the front. They served until the end of the war when they were used to bring troops home. The Imperial War Museum preserves one of these buses, B43, known as *Ole Bill* after a famous contemporary cartoon character.

They also requisitioned 1319 vehicles, that were over a third of LGOC's fleet, for use on overseas battlefields. They were driven by LGOC volunteer drivers. Over 10,000 members of staff joined the

*Above, a LGOC B type bus on active duty in France*

Armed Forces. From 1916, women were employed for the first time, as conductors, clerks and cleaners. Over 4,600 women worked for the LGOC, keeping London's buses running in wartime. They were dismissed at the end of the war, since the jobs had been kept open for the returning soldiers.

The Walthamstow factory built many different types of buses until 1927 when the company relocated to Southall. In 1933, the LGOC became part of the *London Passenger Transport Board* which in turn became *London Transport Board* in 1963.



AEC S-type / LGOC B30R, 10/22, XL    LGOC B-type bus B340 London to Brighton run 2006.    LGOC S433 Single deck S type bus

Bill Bayliss, March 2012